



# News Release

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## **Pfizer, Moderna vaccines now recommended over Johnson & Johnson**

*Preference comes following additional reports of blood clots after J&J vaccinations*

**OLYMPIA** – The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) is recommending people 18 and older choose to receive an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine (Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna) instead of the single-shot Johnson & Johnson (J&J) vaccine. This update follows guidance and recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) and the Western States Scientific Safety Review Workgroup. Individuals who wish to receive the J&J vaccine are encouraged to reach out to their health care provider to discuss their options as J&J will still be available across the state.

The preferential recommendation follows new data presented to the ACIP about thrombosis and thrombocytopenia syndrome, or TTS. TTS is a rare but serious condition involving blood clots and a low blood platelet count seen in some people who received the J&J vaccine. However, the risk is rare. Nationwide, 54 cases of TTS, including nine confirmed deaths, have been reported, which is a fraction of a percent of the 14 million doses of J&J given overall. While TTS has been seen in both men and women, the most at-risk group is women 30 through 49. People who received the J&J vaccine who develop severe headache, abdominal pain, leg pain, or shortness of breath within three weeks after vaccination should contact their health care provider.

Of the more than 11.4 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine given out across Washington, about 436,000 doses have been the J&J vaccine, which equals about 4%. According to data reported to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS) through Nov. 30, there have been six possible cases of TTS following J&J vaccinations in Washington, including one death.

“Public health and safety are, and will always be, our top priorities, which is why we are adopting this new guidance,” said Umair A. Shah, MD, MPH, Secretary of Health. “Today, more

than 5 million Washingtonians are fully vaccinated, which means they are protecting themselves from serious illness, hospitalization, and death. I continue to encourage everyone to get vaccinated and, with this news, boosted with an mRNA vaccine as soon as possible.”

“With this recommendation, COVID-19 vaccines based on mRNA are preferred over J&J vaccine, but J&J continues to be an option for those who aren’t able to receive mRNA vaccine,” said Dr. Tao Sheng Kwan-Gett, Chief Science Officer. “With new variants like omicron on the scene, it’s important for people to get vaccinated and boosted to increase their protection against COVID-19, especially the elderly, children, and adults with chronic conditions. Vaccines save lives.”

Those with questions or concerns are encouraged to talk to their trusted health care provider or visit DOH’s [COVID-19 Vaccine Frequently Asked Questions page](#). Everyone 5 and older is currently eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine. The ACIP recommends everyone 16 and older receive a booster dose of mRNA vaccine two months after the first dose of J&J or six months after completing the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine series. mRNA booster doses after an initial dose of J&J have been shown to be effective. To find vaccine locations near you visit [Vaccine Locator](#), [Vaccines.gov](#), or call the state’s COVID-19 hotline at 833-VAX-HELP. Language assistance is available.

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